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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

September 1, 2019

Being Open to New Insights and Understandings

Grace and peace! Most mornings I take my coffee, sit out in our screened-in porch and reflect with the [UCC Still Speaking morning devotional](#). The porch faces the rising sun that shines through rows of trees, and the sight and sound of birds fill the air. However, I have noticed change in the last few days. As we approach fall, the sun is rising at a slightly different angle and the shadows it casts through the trees is different. I am looking at the same view, but it looks very different.



It made me think about how often a small change can help us see things that we may not have noticed previously. It could be a comment made by an individual or an article we have read; it could be a personal story we heard or even just a question that has arisen. These can lead to seeing a situation or an issue in a slightly different way, providing depth and breadth to our overall understanding. Yet it takes focused listening and reflection to recognize and benefit from the additional insight.

Of course, sometimes we may not want additional insight: we have already made up our mind about a particular person, a situation, or an issue. We can be so focused in our opinion that we miss the comment or the new idea that someone expressed. Therefore, we can miss the insight that can open up new visions or new understandings of life's complexities.

For some of us, September means a change in programs at church, rhythms of family life, or merely a beginning hint of the change in the weather. Whatever September may bring for you, may you be sensitive and open to how even the slightest change can bring new insights and

understandings. Often it is in the midst of those little changes; however, they may come, that God is nudging us to see something new.

Blessings, Char Burch

News from the Conference Office

From the Generosity Coordinator

It's hard to believe that we are already in September. I am looking forward to milder weather and watching seasons change.

September is also the beginning of our Transforming Churches, Transforming Lives grants cycle. Cycle 2, 2019 will begin on **September 4, 2019 and run thru October 16, 2019**. Please check our website for instructions and applications. Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me directly.



As people of faith, we are called to be "**good stewards**" of and assets with which we have been entrusted. Good stewardship calls for financial planning and estate planning to ensure the financial security of our families and loved ones. We must also consider how we will provide for the church or ministry that we love and serve to secure its foundation and vitality for future generations. Planned gifts are a wonderful way to create a meaning legacy for you and your family. A planned gift does not require great wealth. Please invite me to your church so that we may discuss ways that we can get to work on this great initiative.

We appreciate all the ways that you continue to support Our Churches Wider Mission. Your gifts are so appreciated and so very important to the life of this conference. We are grateful!! I look forward to visiting with you in your church.

Blessings, as we continue on the journey...**TOGETHER**,
Min. Carrole



NEW! Two Opportunities for Mandatory Boundary Training

*by Rev. Ann Michele Rogers Bringham
Chairperson, Commission on Ministry*

In January of 2017, the Commission on Ministry of the Southeast Conference voted to make Boundary Awareness Training for all authorized ministers a requirement every 4 years to maintain ministerial standing. This is a requirement across the United Church of Christ and most mainline denominations.

The one-day Training provides the opportunity for authorized ministers to reflect on the importance of maintaining the boundaries of trust while serving God's people.

There are two training opportunities for the initial Healthy Boundaries 101 Course scheduled this fall:

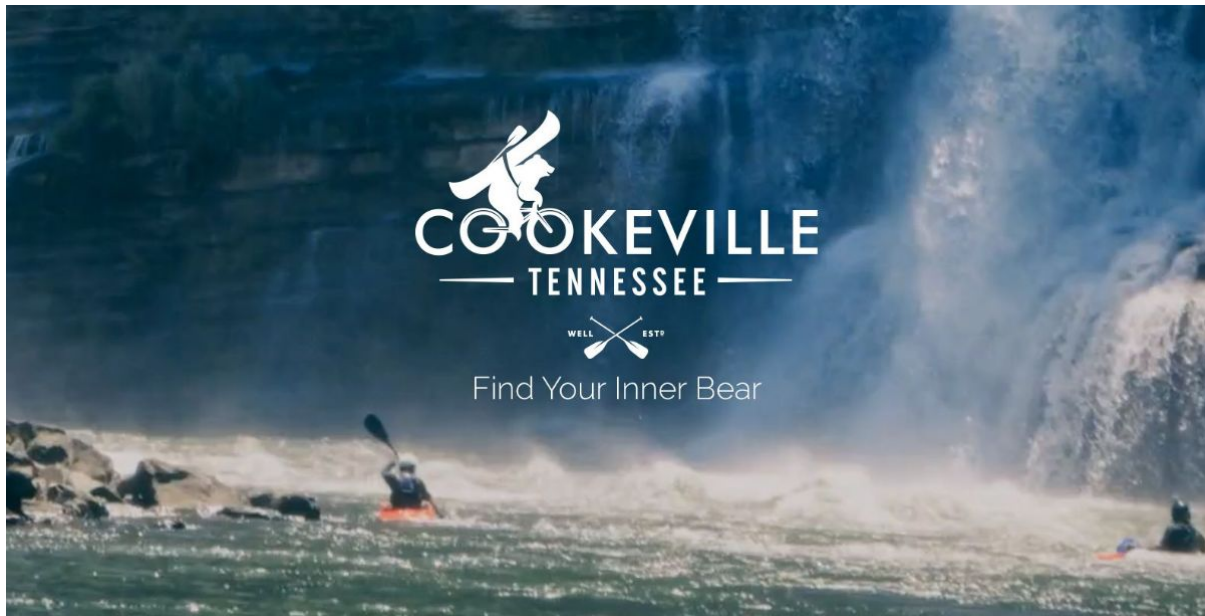
- September 17 (Tuesday) at First Christian Church of Atlanta in Tucker, Georgia
- November 2 (Saturday) in Atlanta, Georgia

If you are planning to attend either of these trainings, please sign up soon because we have to have a minimum of 6 people to offer the training. To register for one of the classes: <https://www.secucc.org/news-and-events/healthy-boundaries-workshops/>

REGISTER FOR BOUNDARY TRAINING

Sept 30 Deadline for the Conference Fiscal Budget

The budget of the Southeast Conference is based on a fiscal year: October 1 through September 30. Therefore, if your local church contributes to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) quarterly, you are encouraged to arrange for the third quarter (calendar year) payment to arrive prior to September 30. Thank you!



ALA-TN-MS Association Gathering Set for Oct 11-12

by Rev. John Gill

Clergy, Members and Friends of the ALA-TN-MS Association in the Southeast Conference of the UCC, please plan to join us at the United Church of Cookeville in Cookeville, Tennessee on Friday, October 11 for worship and fellowship beginning at 7:00 PM, and to continue our meeting on Saturday, October 12, from 9 AM – 3:30 PM. This year's theme will be: *"What Makes Us One?" Sharing stories of healing, hope, & God's love made real in our churches and communities.* At a time of deep division in our world, we will gather to tell the story that makes us one – and how it is expressed in scripture and in the many ministries of welcome, mercy, faith, and justice taking place in our churches and communities across the region. More details are available on our website.

Clergy Retreat – Save the Date

- Date: **March 8-10, 2020** (Sunday evening to Tuesday noon)
 - Place: DuBose Retreat Center, Monteagle (west of Chattanooga)
 - Focus: "Clergy Wellness"
 - Who: All SEC authorized ministers (ordained, licensed) as well as Members in Discernment
-



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2019. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of September 2

- Fairfield Glade Community Church; Fairfield Glade, Tennessee
- Larry Calbert
- Reginald Holloway
- Alan Brett Roof
- Cameron Trimble

Week of September 9

- Community Congregational UCC; Montgomery, Alabama
- Michelle Calderon
- Michelle Holtmann
- Benjamin Rose
- Herbert Turner
- Anita Louise Hauenstein

In Our Prayers

- Prayers for those in the path of **Hurricane Dorian**, including those in the **Bahamas**, and for our Southeast Conference congregations who are under a mandatory evacuation order: **Circular Congregational** in Charleston, **First Congregational** in Savannah, and **Midway Congregational** in Midway, GA.
- **Victory for the World** church for a multitude of losses in recent weeks

Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; First Congregational, Birmingham AL; Pilgrimage, Marietta GA; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL

News from the Wider Church

Reminder of Conference-wide Immigration Response Opportunity

At the General Synod in June, the delegates voted to advocate against the separation of children from families seeking to immigrate to the US. Char Burch will be joining other Conference Ministers traveling to Washington DC with this message, seeking a more humane response to immigrants. In conjunction with that visit, UCC members are invited to participate in a letter-writing campaign.

Letters should be written on behalf of yourself and express your convictions as a citizen and person of faith. They can include drawings from children, personal stories, art and/or thoughts on what welcome means. Letters make a difference! We want to urge Congress to end family and child detention, family separation and the funding for these immoral practices.

You can send your letter personally, or use the Justice and Peace Action Network to send in an email (<https://p2a.co/dXTfOSg>). To look up your member of Congress go to <https://p2a.co/Nmw4YqN>. Anyone can do this!

Send in your letter to the UCC DC Office at:

- United Church of Christ, Washington D.C. Office

% Suanne Breen
100 Maryland Ave, NE, Suite 330
Washington, DC 20002

The deadline for these letters is September 20, 2019. Char will then deliver the letters to the members of congress when she is in Washington.

Here is a Sample Letter Text that can be used:

I am writing as a constituent and person of faith and am continually saddened and troubled by the administration's ongoing attacks on our immigrant neighbors. As you work on funding legislation, I ask that you no longer fund the immoral immigration and deportation policies being implemented now and instead invest in programs that uplift family unity, address the root causes of forced migration, and prioritize human needs by respecting the rights and dignity of every person.



Neighbors in Need Offering

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the [Council for American Indian Ministry](#) (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities. For more information, go to <https://www.ucc.org/nin>.

2020 UCC Health Plan Premium Rates and Plan Enhancements

The Pension Boards of the UCC have announced the following premium rates and plan enhancements for the 2020 plan year, effective January 1, 2020:

- Non-Medicare Health Plan: 3% Increase
- Medicare Supplement Plan: 3% Increase
- Dental Plan: No Change
- Vision Plan: No Change
- Life Insurance and Disability Income Plan: No Change

The following benefit enhancements are also approved as of January 1, 2020:

For the Non-Medicare Plan:

- Availability of Telemedicine/Telehealth services
- Increased access to Urgent Care Services for participants in Plans B and C
- New plan offering, Plan HSA: a High-Deductible Health Plan coupled with a Health Savings Account
- Enhanced Wellness Program

Dental Plan

- Orthodontic care services expanded to children above age 16 and adults

As is their customary practice, churches/employers and individual plan participants will receive detailed information by mail later this Summer concerning applicable rates and enhancements for 2020. Please feel free to contact Frank Loiacono with any questions at floiacono@pbucc.org or by phone at 212-729-2806.



Much More Than Hammer and Nails!

by Mary Ruth

If you want to experience a top notch work camp/one of a kind mission trip, then consider joining in on a trip to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi MS Nov 8-14, 2020. Pleasant Hill Community Church has reserved space for up to 20 work campers (18 years and older) and is inviting others from UCC Southeast Conference to join the group. In November 2017 nine Pleasant Hill Church members made the trip. One of the coordinators for the 2020 trip is Pleasant Hill Community Church member, Mary Ruth, who is also serving on the Board of Directors at Back Bay Mission. For more details about Back Bay Mission and the 'volunteer mission trip experience' at BBM, visit thebackbaymission.org. If you are interested in finding out more about the trip, contact Mary Ruth at marybillruth@gmail.com to be added to the 'interested' list (already have 9 people interested). An informational session will be offered in November 2019.

News from our Local Congregations



Activites at Forgiving Heart UCC

by Rev. Emily A. Bel, Pastor

The second week of August was a busy week for Forgiving Heart UCC in Columbus, Georgia. On Monday the 12th, we joined with about 15 other churches for Columbus State University to welcome the students back to school. Each church provided things a college student might need, such as laundry detergent, pens, candy, cookies, information about the church. At Forgiving Heart, we passed out Ramen noodles, pens, homemade chocolate cookies, and a reusable bag with the church info on it carry all the things they were accumulating. We spoke to many students about God's love for them and invited them to Forgiving Heart to experience the love of a church family. Then on Wednesday the 14th, Pastor Emily, along with people from various LGBTQ organizations, met with Congressman Sanford Bishop to discuss protections for LGBTQ people on a national level. It was a very informative and productive meeting.

Training and Learning Opportunities

Magic in the Mountains

If you have never visited the mountains of North Carolina in Autumn. This is your chance. The Blowing Rock Conference Center is near the quaint town of Blowing Rock that is filled with art galleries, fun shops and places to sit and people watch. There are places to hike and expansive vistas with breathtaking views. Come spend time with your sisters, in fun and fellowship. Experience autumn in Blowing Rock, NC.



Our Biennial Retreat comes to the beautiful mountain town of Blowing Rock, NC, October 18-20, 2019. Our theme this year is "Strong Sisters' Stories"! **The registration deadline is September 6, 2019.** [More details are on our website.](#)



Our Whole Lives Facilitator Training

Two Different Classes Offered on Oct 4-6

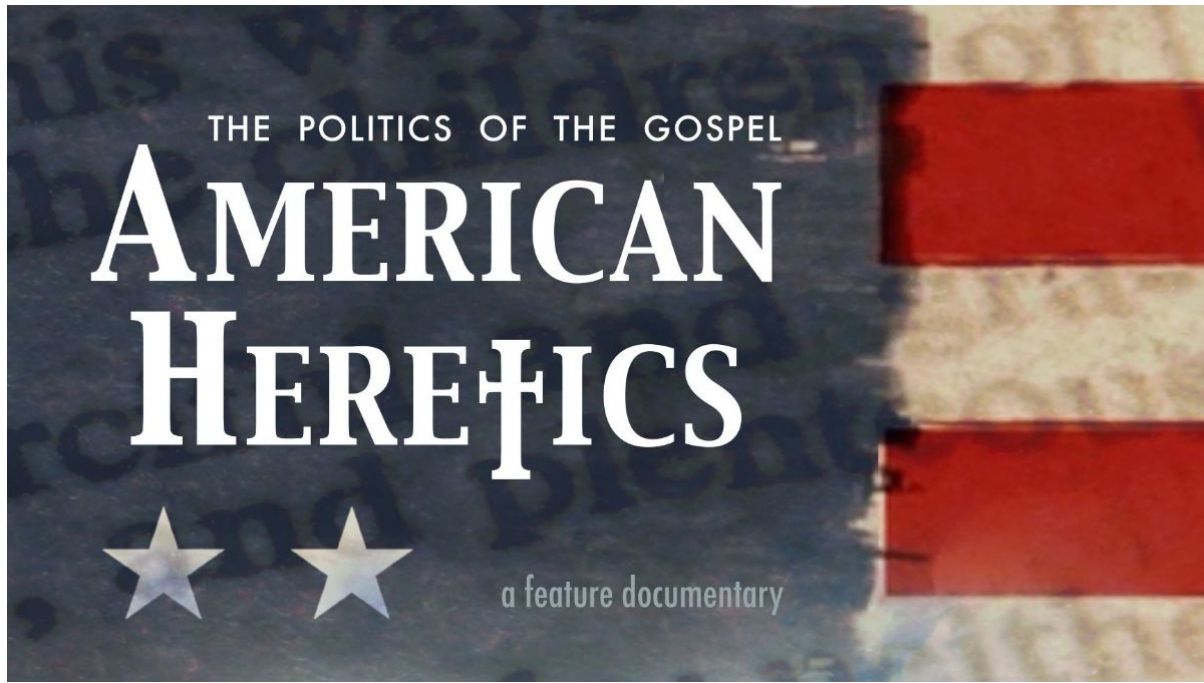
Our Whole Lives is a series of sexuality education programs for six age groups: grades K-1, grades 4-6, grades 7-9, grades 10-12, Young Adults and Adults. The resources are written by professional sexuality educators and provide accurate information for parents, teachers and pastors to be used in the affirming and supportive setting of our churches.

Facilitator Training for Grades K-1/4-6 OR Grades 7-9/10-12

- Location: Emerson UU, Marietta, GA
- Registrar: Beth Kline, DRE@emersonuu.org, 404-394-1561
- Deadline: Sept 4

Young Adult/Adult/Older Adult Facilitator Training

- Location: Holston Valley Unitarian Universalist Church
- Registration: info@riseHFL.org, 423-250-3046!
- More details [on our website](#)



"American Heretic" Documentary in Nashville

A film recently [highlighted by the UCC](#) will be shown at a special one-night screening in Nashville on Thursday, Sep. 12. "American Heretics: The Politics of the Gospel" takes audiences into the buckle of Bible belt where a group of defiant Oklahomans are rising up to challenge deeply rooted fundamentalist Christian doctrine. Labeled as "heretics" for their beliefs and actions, they refuse to wield their faith as a sword sharpened by literal interpretations of the Bible. Especially those interpretations that continue to justify nationalism and hack away at landmark civil rights protections for women, minorities, immigrants, and the LGBTQ communities. These American Heretics are still interested in saving you from hell, but it's the earthly one, where poverty, discrimination and nationalism oppress those "who are the least among us." The movie features Rev. Dr. Robin Meyers and Rev. Lori Walke, two of the pastors at Mayflower UCC in Oklahoma City. Watch the trailer here: <https://www.americanhereticsthefilm.com/>.

Ecumenical Clergy Support Group in Atlanta

We are living in especially stressful times, and spiritual leaders absorb a lot of their congregants' stress energies. To remain resilient and to prevent burn out, it is more important than ever for clergy to not get isolated, but to find colleagues for mutual support. The **Training and Counseling Center (TACC)** in Atlanta is offering a newly forming Ecumenical Clergy Support Group starting in October 2019. This confidential clergy group will meet

every first and third Thursday of the month from 1pm-3pm. The cost is \$40 per person per group session. For more information call Dorothea 404-876-6266, #2002.

Two Taize Brothers Visit the Atlanta Area

Two Taize Brothers will be on tour in the U.S. in September/October and their visits include at least 3 visits to Atlanta locations Oct. 1-3. For information about locations and contact information go to https://www.taize.fr/en_article20777.html

Conference Calendar

Healthy Boundaries 101: Fundamentals

September 17 @ 9:00 am - 4:00 pm EDT
Atlanta, GA

Board of Directors Retreat

September 20 - September 21
Covenant Community Church, Center Point, AL

Staff Meeting

September 24 @ 9:00 am - 10:30 am EDT
Online Virtual Meeting

Retired Servants Retreat

October 7 - October 9
Blowing Rock Conference Center

Southern Region Women's Retreat

October 18 - October 20
Blowing Rock Conference Center

Upper Room UCC Fellowship Fall Potluck Supper

October 26 @ 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm CDT
Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville, TN

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch**; cburch@secucc.org

Assoc. Conference Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; hbardole@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; cmoss@secucc.org

Director of Communications: **Don Harris**; dharris@secucc.org

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